

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 000525

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, DRL, RM, L, AND H  
PASS TO USAID

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/04/2014

TAGS: [FAID](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [BM](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: USING ESF TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY IN BURMA

REF: A) RANGOON 424 B) STATE 81570

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

-----  
SUMMARY  
-----

1. (S) The paramount U.S. policy interest in Burma is promoting democracy, a objective predicated on the legitimacy of the 1990 elections in many U.S.-sponsored UN resolutions and policy statements. Congress has earmarked millions of dollars in Economic Support Funds to specifically foster this top policy goal. Twelve democratic parties that participated in the 1990 elections have requested support from the United States (ref A and previous). As a once-off event, we propose to provide \$150,000 in financial assistance to the National League for Democracy's social welfare programs and to the eleven ethnic minority parties of the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) to help them maintain cooperation and viability in the face of increased repression.

2. (S) This proposal would provide \$10,000 worth of kyat to each of the eleven UNA member parties and to each of four NLD-affiliated social welfare programs. As nine of these twelve parties have been outlawed since 1990 by the military regime and the three remaining legal parties are forbidden by the junta from receiving foreign assistance, any U.S. assistance in response to the parties' requests must be provided in kyat and in exchange for a nominal cover good or service. This proposal tracks with ref A and previous; the only change is one additional party added to the UNA member list and dropping of the request to provide support to the NLD's Vice Chairman, U Tin Oo. End Summary.

-----  
THE NEED  
-----

3. (SBU) Fifteen years after stunning Burma's military regime with their overwhelming electoral victory, the twelve democratic parties in question have suffered tremendous setbacks and repression. Apart from the NLD, most functions of the other parties are handled by a small number of individuals on a face-to-face basis. In most cases the party chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, and/or MPs-elect bear most of the financial burden in addition to the personal risks of attempting to sustain the organizations, provide member support, and further Burma's broader democratic agenda. The party leaders, often fired from professional positions or hindered in their occupations because of their pro-democracy affiliation, are generally poor.

4. (SBU) Of the 485 candidates elected in 1990, as of February 2005, 83 have passed away. Of these, three died in prison, three died shortly after being released from prison, and two have been assassinated. Twelve MPs-elect are imprisoned and 29 are in exile (twelve in Thailand and nine in the U.S.). 182 have been dismissed or forced to resign from their parties. A further sixteen MPs-elect are from parties aligned with the ruling junta. The NLD's Vice Chairman, U Tin Oo, remains in house arrest.

5. (S) NOTE: U Tin Oo's wife approached the embassy seeking financial assistance; the family's only source of income has been a rental house, but since the regime has cut the telephone connection Tin Oo has been unable to rent the property. We have previously requested \$3,000 to help U Tin Oo buy food and pay his utilities (ref A) by leasing his rental house for storage, but for simplicity's sake we have dropped it from this updated proposal. END NOTE

-----  
RECIPIENTS  
-----

6. (C) The UNA member parties and their regional bases of support follow:

Arakan League for Democracy (western Burma, Rakhine State)

Chin National League for Democracy (western Burma, Chin State)

Democratic Organization for Kayan National Unity (eastern Burma, Kayah State)

Kachin State National Congress for Democracy (northern Burma, Kachin State)

Kayah State Nationalities League for Democracy (eastern Burma, Kayah State)

Kayin National Congress for Democracy (eastern Burma, Karen State)

Mara People's Party (western Burma, Chin State)

Mon National Democratic Front (SE Burma, Mon State)

Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (NE Burma, Shan State)

Shan State Kokang Democratic Party (NE Burma, Shan State)

Zomi National Congress (western Burma, Chin State)

17. (C) The NLD provides very modest social services to its members and supporters by means of social welfare programs (SWP) run by party members but organizationally distinct from the party itself. The SWPs provide services at the NLD party headquarters and on a limited outreach basis. Like the ESF-funded and exile-based Association for Aid to Political Prisoners, an NLD SWP provides very modest support to political prisoners and their families. Other SWPs fund modest assistance in the areas of health, education, and infant and mother care.

-----  
WHAT WOULD THE ASSISTANCE BE USED FOR?  
-----

18. (S) The ethnic parties, for the most part based in the horse-shoe of mountains that rings the Burman heartland of the country, are isolated from one another and far away from the NLD headquarters in Rangoon. The United Nationalities Alliance and the broader Committee Representing the Peoples Parliament serve as coordinating organizations for the pro-democracy movement; the UNA is the ethnic parties' forum and the CRPP joins the UNA, NLD, and other pro-democracy MPs-elect. The proposed funding would be used by the party leadership for transportation expenses between their home regions and Rangoon to attend coordination meetings at pro-democracy fora, for communication expenses between party headquarters and district offices and constituents, for youth wing training programs, stipends, and scholarships; to promote any social welfare programs the party may run, such as those serving mother and infant health needs of members, and to help allay costs of office space and equipment. In short, keeping a party together as a cohesive organization takes resources (ask any U.S. politician); this proposal seeks a modest amount of money to help Burma's courageous democrats to keep the flame of democracy alive.

19. (S) Assistance to the NLD's SWPs would fund nutritional and medicinal supplements for political prisoners, help cover travel expenses of their family members visiting prisons, provide immunizations and vitamins to infants and their mothers, provide education expense monies for the very poorest children of NLD members, and help cover emergency medical expenses of party leaders and other members, including released political prisoners.

-----  
DELIVERY AND ACCOUNTABILITY  
-----

110. (S) Depending on availability and suitability, post would provide the assistance to a party's chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, MPs-elect, or a designee of a senior party leader. The recipient would provide an agreed-to nominal cover good or service that would vary from party to party depending on the circumstances.

111. (S) As stated, nine of the twelve parties have been deregistered, or banned, by the regime. They thus operate unofficially and with minimal written records that, if seized by the police, would land the leaders in prison for many years. Even the NLD purposefully keeps scant records for security's sake. It has, officially, stopped enrolling new members, maintaining party membership lists, or issuing new party membership cards. Most of the party leaders have been in prison at least once and many have suffered severe torture at the hands of the regime. They are a hardened and determined bunch. They also know how dangerous written records, correspondence, and even telephone calls can be. Most party business is conducted face-to-face in small groups. Thus, accountability will be limited to a signature of receipt of the assistance and follow-up verbal reports on how the assistance has been used to support party activities.

112. (C) Post suggests Department provide fiscal data in an

advice of allotment similar to Ref B, "Advice of Allotment ESF Funding" in which ESF funding was provided to support an ongoing, stealth pro-democracy training program. Operative text of AOA cable could be similar to Ref B, para 10, "This increase provides funds for (the purpose of promoting inter-ethnic cooperation among democratic political parties in Burma."

113. (U) Please advise soonest.  
Martinez